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Unofficial translation

A LETTER OF CHRISTMAS SHEPHERD
ABOUT PEACE

TO ALL MY BELOVED CATHOLIC PARISHIONERS OF THE DILI DIOCESE priests, monks - nuns, young men.

"And this is a sign for you : You will find a baby wrapped in a diaper and laid down in a manger" *(Lk. 2:12)*.

My dearest brothers and sisters in the name of Jesus Christ. Celebrating together this 1989 Christmas mystery, let me as a shepherd, give you a Christmas message: God has shown us his great love. He gave us His only son to be with us. He entrusted the creation of a new life in the world to us so that the redeemed faithfuls shall never be separated again. The redeemor was born in Bethlehem Cave, he was wrapped in a diaper and laid down in a manger. Together with the shepherds, we were invited to hurry to go to Bethlehem, to see what happened there, as informed to us by God ". *(Lk 2 : 15)*

My dearest brothers and sisters. We the shepherds, must try to do some introspection. By kneeling around the manger on this Christmas day, we are moved and our heart melted, feeling so small before the Redeemer baby, the expression of God's great love. How small and weak we are. The more we try to go into the mystery of God's love, we feel the urge to abandon all our frozen unhappy feelings of arrogance, hostility, hatred, jealousy, maliciousness, antipathy, etc. We are then attracted to go into the most fundamental desire of men to live in peace, harmony and brotherhood through love and forgiveness .

This deepest desire -- noblest and most glorious feeling of men's wish for unity as a family -- ushered and enabled us to see the changing world's reality. The change now taking place in East Europe interest us because there we see how social barriers are begining to be torn down and a new life marked by friendship and peace is being ventured by all.

5/

A bright sign towards change is also offered to us in East Timor. Together, we obtained deep spiritual experience thanks to the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. We were given the opportunity personally to see the Pope, who visited our beloved East Timor. We responded his hand-waving, felt the very warm of his presence and listened to his special message and hope for us. A bright sign shone from the Pope's hope, that of peace, reconciliation, harmony and the healing of wounds through forgiving each other. The Pope said that to bring this bright sign to East Timor, the church needed courage, determination and patience. Now it is up to us to respond to the Pope's hope.

The Christmas mystery is the mystery of God's love that calls on us to eliminate all kind of differences among us. This mystery invites us to forgive each other, to forget our bitter past, to forget our unrealistic wishes and instead, we must concentrate all our strength to develop our common future in all aspects of live. We, East Timorese have suffered for too long. We wish to have peace, harmony and prosperity. These desires of the people must inspire us with courage, determination and patience within ourselves. Let us be guided by the principle "SOLUS POPOLI, SUPREMA LEX".

The Angel's message to the shepherds was: "Let us not be afraid !" May our knowing the Christmas mystery brings us to personal liberation from fear, worries and suspicion. May love of God which shines from the manger be with us and gives courage to stop all actions, which may create confusion, suspicion or sharpen differences and animosities, so that we have the courage to avoid activities which may cause restlessness such as demonstration, fanning the young people's feeling, distribute illegal pamphlets, etc. May love of God gives us determination to distant ourselves from dissension. In every upheaval it is the people who suffer, while all what our people wish to have is a new peaceful and brotherly life.

The Christmas mystery opens our mind to God's will to develop a new compassionate world of togetherness. It is God's wish to dialogue with men in developing a new common life in the world. This wish of God to dialogue is serious. Despite man's arrogance, rejection, egoism, and frozen heart, God continues to offer His cooperation. And God will remain true to his offors.

His wish and offer for cooperation in developing a new world is also conveyed to us: "Are we also going to develop a new life in East Timor through dialogue ?". The new world desired by God is also the new world for everyone. And so, when we hope for a new life in East Timor, this should be for everyone without discrimination. This spirit of dialogue must also be ventured with full dedication and be based on the idea that all East Timorese long for a new peaceful and brotherly life.

6/7

Brothers and sisters in the name of Jesus Christ. That is my reflection on the Christmas mystery, the great mystery, of love of God. By God's love which is "wrapped in a diaper and laid down in a manger", I call upon all of you to forgive each other, to accept and serve each other. This is the only way to enable us to concentrate, to serve the interests of the PEOPLE towards prosperity, to focus our mind on avoiding anything which may obstruct the realization of this goal of prosperity (Solus popoli, suprema lex).

May Ave Maria, the protector of the Diocese of Dili, be the way for our spiritual healing, her children in East Timor.

MERRY CHRISTMAS 1989 AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 1990.

Dili, 14th December 1989

(signed)

Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo,SDB

Titular Bishop of Lorium

Apostolic Administrator of Dili

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